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Mixed...A Short Word With a Long List of Complexities

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INVESTIGATING DIVERSITY

Exploring Race, Gender, and Unity in the Adventist Church

FEBRUARY 5, 2019 BY HANNAH D'AVANZO

Mixed...A Short Word With a Long List of Complexities



What is your race? Where are you from? What is your background? Such inquiries have been common since childhood. The questions come due to the fact that I am racially mixed. Mix...a short word with a long list of complexities.

Today, we commonly see people of mixed ethnicities choosing one side they identify with most. One example of this is former president, Barack Obama.

Obama said he chose his African American identity, in part, because of how he's perceived and because "black was cool," according to reporting by CNN.

Not only is he an example of this, but many people today face the same issue. Growing up, I always felt very racially ambiguous. A common question most people ask me is, "What

race are you?”

Knowing that they were suggesting that I look “foreign,” I always answered with “Filipino.” That being said, I always felt less Filipino than half of my family, while also feeling less Italian than the other half.

By being of mixed ethnicities, it’s common to feel like you are not truly one or the other. Though I had my own biases with this topic, I wanted to see how other mixed people felt and asked several other students.

Joseph Hyde, half African American and half Jamaican, said at home he lives by the African American culture but here at Southern he feels more connected to his Caribbean roots. Though he feels a connection, a downside he mentions is: “You’re not always as accepted because you’re not fully Caribbean.”

I approached another student, Baily Nolfé. Baily is half Filipino and half Italian. He says, “I see other people who are super cultured and have strong cultures, but I feel like I couldn’t do that as much.”

Though Baily identifies more with his Filipino ethnicity more than his Italian, he says, “I’m a product of both sides, and I get to experience them while also creating my own thing.”

Alex Bahn, half Indian and half white, tells a story of the struggle of being mixed.

“The treatment that I get for being half white is worse than the treatment that I get for being half Indian,” Bahn said. “I had a boss that really liked me. We got along well, and we both liked sports. So we would have lots of conversations about basketball and football.

“However, once he met my dad (who is white), he began to treat me differently. Like I had been keeping a secret from him or like I was a different person,” he continued. “Our relationship was never the same. Getting treated differently by people based solely on what race you are is wrong and definitely is the thing that I struggle with the most.”

Thinking that two races are challenging enough, I then spoke to Taylor Maddox, who shared with me the beauty and struggles of being mixed with three different ethnicities.

Taylor has German, African American and Jamaican roots.

“I realize I’m more complex and not just Jamaican and African American, but I’m also Caucasian and I’ve come to embrace it all,” she said.

When asked about the downsides of being mixed, Taylor said: “Black people see me as too white and white people see me as too Black.”

When asked which culture, she identifies with most, she proudly shares: “I identify as Taylor.”

Although feeling racially ambiguous can leave one with a desire for belonging, I’ve learned to embrace it. I am able to connect with many different people. I see life through two different cultures, leaving life a little more colorful. We must make it a point to always remember we are the products of something new and diverse.

DIVERSITY DISCUSSIONS

AFRICAN AMERICAN, BARACK OBAMA, CAUCASIAN, CULTURE, FILIPINO, GERMAN, ITALIAN, JAMAICAN, MIXED ETHNICITY, MIXED RACE, WHITE